Infrastructure Health and Safety Association Guidance on construction supervisor responsibilities during COVID-19

Overview

During the COVID-19 (coronavirus) outbreak, we all need to do our part to keep workers, customers and the public safe and healthy so we can stop the spread and prepare to reopen the province, when we are ready.

Below is a set of resources, tips and best practices to help employers and employees prevent the spread of COVID-19 and work together to reopen the province.

Employers and workers in Ontario have certain duties and rights under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* (OHSA) and its regulations. Employers should also review and follow any applicable directives and guidance coming from the Chief Medical Officer of Health and Ministry of Health.

Learn more about:

- workers' rights
- employers' responsibilities

You should also regularly check for requirements applicable to your region, such as:

- the provincial COVID-19 Response Framework
- municipal bylaws
- orders from your local public health unit

To help prevent outbreaks, you are encouraged to develop a COVID-19 workplace safety plan. All businesses operating in a region in lockdown are required to have one under provincial regulation.

Report COVID-19 case(s) in the workplace to the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development.

For more information, visit: ihsa.ca/COVID-19

Best practices

Recognize hazards and assess risks: The first step to controlling risks in a workplace is to identify the risks. This applies to all workplace hazards, not just COVID-19. Identifying and controlling workplace hazards is required of all employers in Ontario under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* and its regulations. The key risk factors for COVID-19 transmission include:

- prolonged exposure – spending more time with potentially infected people
- close proximity – working close to others
- crowded places – having more people in a space
- closed spaces – indoor spaces with less fresh air exchange (working indoors is riskier than working outdoors)
- forceful exhalation – activities that cause people to breathe more deeply, such as exercise, speaking loudly and singing

It is possible for COVID-19 to be spread by people who do not have any symptoms. This makes effective control measures very important. We must act as if everyone is infected when setting up controls.

The risk of severe health outcomes is not the same for all workers. The risk increases with age and is higher for people with certain medical conditions.

Learn what symptoms of COVID-19 can be observed and look for these in your workers. Speak to workers about the symptoms and explain the importance of protecting each other from potential exposure by reporting symptoms immediately.

What are the symptoms? Symptoms range from mild, like the flu and other common respiratory infections, to severe. The most common symptoms include:

- fever (feeling hot to the touch, a temperature of 37.8 degrees Celsius or higher)
- chills
- cough that's new or worsening (continuous, more than usual)
- barking cough, making a whistling noise when breathing (croup)
- shortness of breath (out of breath, unable to breathe deeply)
- sore throat
- difficulty swallowing
- runny, stuffy or congested nose (not related to seasonal allergies or other known causes or conditions)
- lost sense of taste or smell
- pink eye (conjunctivitis)
- headache that's unusual or long lasting
- digestive issues (nausea/vomiting, diarrhea, stomach pain)
- muscle aches
- extreme tiredness that is unusual (fatigue, lack of energy)

For more information, visit: ihsa.ca/COVID-19

- falling down often
- for young children and infants: sluggishness or lack of appetite

Provide your contact information to all your workers so they can call and advise you if they or a family member is experiencing symptoms while at home and will not be coming into work to self-isolate.

Be familiar with the employer's health and safety protocols for responding to suspected COVID-19 cases.

Control the risk of transmission in the workplace:
Controlling the transmission of COVID-19 in the workplace involves making changes to the way we do things. Use the hierarchy of controls to help you choose the right control measures for your workplace.

Every control measure has strengths and weaknesses, so it is important to combine controls. Each additional control adds a level of protection. For controls that rely on individual behaviours, it is critical that people apply them correctly and consistently.

Some questions that may be helpful when considering control measures include:

- Can this task be completed while maintaining physical distancing?
- Can workers wear a source control mask while performing this work?
- Can this task be conducted at a later, safer time?
- Is there a different procedure that can be used?

Infection prevention and control measures prevent the spread of the virus by breaking the chain of transmission. For example, public health guidance includes staying at least 2 metres away from others which avoids close contact; washing hands removes the virus and prevents people from touching their faces with contaminated hands.

For COVID-19 in the workplace, it is recommended that employers and business owners conduct a risk assessment to determine the most appropriate controls and actions for a particular workplace/situation. Reference the IHSA's guide on the risk assessment process to help facilitate this and review Sample 1 and Sample 2 for examples.

Always start by considering the most effective controls first. It is best to begin by trying to eliminate the hazard – to remove it from the workplace altogether. Where that is not possible, use multiple engineering and administrative controls first to prevent the spread. Protective equipment (including personal protective equipment (PPE) and community protective equipment) should be relied on only where engineering and administrative controls do not sufficiently reduce the risk to workers.

In addition to the above recommendations, employers should determine whether PPE* needs to be part of their hazard control plan. The need for PPE should be based on a risk assessment

taking into account environmental conditions and also take into consideration input from the local public health unit. Although proper use of PPE can help prevent some exposures, it should not take the place of other control measures. Note: If physical distance and separation cannot be maintained, workers should have PPE consisting of surgical/procedure mask and eye protection (goggles or face shield).

- Workers must use PPE as required by their employer.
- Workers should be trained on the proper use, care and limitations of any required PPE.

*NOTE: Please be reminded that most face coverings (non-medical masks) have not been tested to a known standard and do not constitute PPE. In some circumstances, face coverings may be used as an effective means of source control, but should not be viewed as an appropriate substitute for physical distancing in the workplace.

1. **Maintain physical distancing**. Everyone in Ontario should be practicing physical distancing to reduce their exposure to other people. They should do their best to avoid close contact with people outside of their immediate families. Close contact includes being within two (2) meters (6 feet) of another person.

2. **Reporting illness.** At this time, it is recommended that any worker who has any symptoms related to cold, flu, or COVID-19 be sent home, or stay at home if they have not already arrived at work.
   - Supervisors should provide their contact information to their immediate crew members, and advise the workers to call if they or a family member is experiencing any of the symptoms linked to COVID-19 before coming into work. The supervisor can them let them know whether they should self-isolate instead of coming into work.
   - People who are self-isolating should seek clinical assessment over the phone; either by calling their primary care provider's office or Telehealth Ontario 1-866-797-0000. If they need additional assessment, the primary care provider or Telehealth Ontario will direct them.
   - If your worker is on site and needs immediate medical assistance, you should call 911 and mention the worker's travel history and symptoms.
   - When a worker has tested positive, the supervisor should communicate with the worker to:
     - Create a list of people that this worker could have been in direct contact with that day and, if possible, in previous days.
     - Identify and create a list of locations where the worker was recently working, including common areas such as lunchrooms and washrooms.
     - Initiate immediate cleaning and disinfection of these locations since they are potentially contaminated with the COVID-19 virus.
     - Identify and create a list of tools and equipment that the worker was recently using. These are also potentially contaminated by the COVID-19 virus and need to be immediately cleaned and disinfected.
   - A supervisor might choose to seek guidance on this matter from the local public health unit.

For more information, visit: ihsa.ca/COVID-19

- Before sending a worker home, remind the worker to minimize the risk of transmitting the virus by maintaining physical distancing practices and using proper coughing/sneezing etiquette while travelling home. This will help to keep areas they visit, as well as their vehicle, uninfected. It will also protect others if they use shared or public transportation.
- Initiate and arrange for cleaning contaminated areas, tools, and equipment to ensure the appropriate isolation, cleaning, and disinfecting processes are followed.
- Keep other personnel from accessing these areas until the cleaning and disinfectant products have achieved their contact time, as stated on the manufacturer's instructions.
- Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development reporting requirements: Employers must report all known positive test results for COVID-19, to:
    o The Ministry (in writing) within four days
    o The joint health and safety representative
    o A trade union (if applicable)

3. **How to self-isolate**. Self-isolating means staying at home and avoiding contact with other people to help prevent the spread of disease to others in your home and your community.

Ontario's Stop the spread webpage provides information to assess symptoms at home (or at work), how to isolate, and many other topics.

Screen for COVID-19:
Screening for COVID-19: guidance for employers | Ontario.ca
This document provides employers with an overview of workplace screening for COVID-19 and information to help them make decisions about the use of rapid antigen screening.

Screening helps keep infected workers and others from entering the workplace thereby reducing possible workplace transmission.

- Question-based screening uses information about symptoms and exposures to identify people who may be infectious.
- Rapid antigen screening is used to help identify people who are infectious before they develop symptoms.

To further protect workers and help reduce transmission, workers who have passed screening must continue to follow all public health and workplace control measures including masking and maintaining physical distance.

Masks:
Learn more about using masks in the workplace including how to select, care for and use them to protect workers from COVID-19.

For more information, visit: ihsa.ca/COVID-19

Vaccines:
COVID-19 vaccines and workplace health and safety | Ontario.ca
This guidance document explains how vaccines work to protect you when you are vaccinated, why COVID-19 workplace control measures need to be maintained even after workers are vaccinated, and some considerations for employers about workplace policies and supporting their workers to get vaccinated.

Workplace controls are measures that employers use to help prevent workers from being exposed to hazards like those posed by COVID-19. Vaccines are a good complement to workplace controls, but cannot replace them. They have different purposes:

- Workplace controls help prevent workers from being exposed to COVID-19.
- Vaccines help protect workers from getting sick if they are exposed.

To protect workers and help reduce the chance of COVID-19 transmission at the workplace, it is important to maintain workplace control measures even after vaccination.

Evaluate:
Changes to work procedures or practices related to COVID-19 may affect the way you have routinely managed other risks in the workplace. Thus, it is recommended that you consider the various preventative measures on an ongoing basis, and review and adjust accordingly if they are not working as intended or have created new risks or challenges.

Ensure the worker is clear of their responsibility to self-isolate and seek clinical assessment over the phone, either through Telehealth Ontario (1-866-797-0000) or by calling their primary care provider's office. If additional assessment is needed, their primary care provider or Telehealth may direct them to receive in-person care options.

It is also important to relay to the worker any financial assistance that is available to help affected workers that declare symptoms. Consider providing an information package to help any workers that are sent home to self-isolate.

Keep in contact with the worker about their health and ask to share any test results they have regarding confirmation of COVID-19. You may need to share the confirmation of COVID-19 with other workers that were sent home due to this exposure, or if permitted by health officials, inform the other workers they can end their self-isolation.

Share information
Provide clear information and instruction to workers and others. Make sure they know what they need to do to protect themselves and others. Provide clear guidance on policies, procedures and other controls including:

- the sanitization of the work areas
- how workers and contractors report illnesses
- how to ensure physical distancing

For more information, visit: ihsa.ca/COVID-19

- when PPE or source control masking is required
- how work will be scheduled
- screening measures

Some things to consider:

- Set up or use your current internal communication systems to provide frequent reminders and updates.
- Post information for workers and other people (such as at the access points to each project, by the elevator or hoist, close to the lunchroom, office or other common areas).
- Share information in all languages spoken by your workers, if possible, and provide information in ways that are easy to understand, like graphics.
- Share information about social, financial and mental health supports and how to stay healthy at home and while travelling between home and work.
- Train and re-train on procedures.

Self-monitor for symptoms for 10 days after exposure.

Resources

Stay updated with daily government updates:

- **Government of Ontario**
- **Government of Canada**
- **Public Health Ontario**

Ontario government and agency-issued resources about COVID-19

Develop your COVID-19 workplace safety plan: Learn how you can create a plan to help protect your workers and others from novel coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19). **Workplace Safety Plan**

The **Ontario Ministry of Health** is providing consistent updates on the provincial government's response to the outbreak, including:

- status of cases in Ontario
- current affected areas
- symptoms and treatments
- how to protect yourself and self-isolate
- updated Ontario news on the virus

Public Health Ontario is providing up-to-date resources on COVID-19, including:

For more information, visit: ihsa.ca/COVID-19

- links to evolving public health guidelines, position statements and situational updates
- synopsis of key articles updating on the latest findings related to the virus
- recommendations for use of personal protective equipment
- information on infection prevention and control
- testing information
- other public resources

Other COVID-19 resources

Health Canada outlines the actions being taken by the Government of Canada to limit spread of the virus, as well as what is happening in provinces and communities across the country. It also maintains a live update of the number of cases by province.

The **World Health Organization** is updating the latest guidance and information related to the global outbreak and spread beyond Canadian borders.

It also provides the most up-to-date information on:

- current research and development around the virus
- a COVID-19 situation "dashboard"
- emergency preparedness measures
- live media updates on the spread of the virus

This resource does not replace the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* (OHSA) and its regulations, and should not be used as or considered legal advice. Health and safety inspectors apply the law based on the facts in the workplace.

For more information, visit: ihsa.ca/COVID-19